

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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ALL NATO CAPITALS

S E C R E T STATE 117817

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, PARM, NCAP, IN

SUBJECT: ALLIED ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST

REF: A) USNATO 2865; B) USNATO 2981; C) STATE 104770

FOLLOWING IS AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST AS REQUESTED IN REFTELS FOR USE IN POLAD MEETING.

1. BACKGROUND ON TEST:

A) INDIAN MOTIVATION: INDIAN MOTIVES A BLEND OF FACTORS, STRONGEST OF WHICH WAS PROBABLY YEARNING TO ATTAIN MAJOR

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POWER STATUS. IN ADOPTING PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSION

(PNE)STANCE, INDIA HOPES TO GET THIS STATUS WHILE MINIMIZING OPPROBRIUM ATTACHED TO DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS MAY ALSO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE, BUT INDIANS REALIZE EXPLODING A DEVICE IS A FAR CRY FROM HAVING A SOPHISTICATED NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND DELIVERY SYSTEM. SOME INDIANS HAVE ARGUED, HOWEVER, THAT POSSESSION OF EVEN RUDIMENTARY WEAPONS AND DELIVERY SYSTEM WOULD PROVIDE A DETERRENT AGAINST CHINA AND REDUCE INDIAN DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION. TIMING OF TEST MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN KEYED TO BOOST SAGGING INDIAN MORALE IN FACE INCREASING DOMESTIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND POLITICAL DISCONTENT. MOST INDIANS PROBABLY INDIAN EXAMPLE, HOWEVER, COULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW SUIT, CLAIMING THEY TOO ARE FOLLOWING ROUTE OF "PEACEFUL" ENTRY.

E) US: US POSITION IS THAT WE CONTINUE TO OPPOSE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION BECAUSE OF THE ADVERSE IMPACT IT HAS ON GLOBAL STABILITY. WE ARE CURRENTLY ASSESSING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDIAN TEST. SEE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE IN REF C.

3. SECURITY OF INFORMATION AND MATERIALS: FACT THAT INDIA ALMOST CERTAINLY ACQUIRED PLUTONIUM FROM UNSAFEGUARDED CIRUS REACTOR SUPPLIED BY CANADA POINTS UP IMPORTANCE OF SAFEGUARD SYSTEM AND NEED TO STRENGTHEN NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS WORLD-WIDE. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT INDIA WILL SHARE ITS EXPLOSIVE TECHNOLOGY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES; POSSIBLE WILLINGNESS OF INDIA TO EXCHANGE SECURITY OF INFORMATION AND MATERIALS FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BENEFITS IS ALSO A FACTOR TO BE WATCHED. BOTH OF THESE POSSIBILITIES ARE HARD TO ANALYSE AT THIS POINT. POSSIBILITY THAT NUCLEAR SECRETS COULD FALL INTO HANDS OF TERRORISTS GROUPS, AT LEAST IN INDIA, APPEARS HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

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